

IV. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

An archaeological identification survey was conducted at the historic Alfred Street Baptist Church (44AX161) in Alexandria, Virginia, by Engineering-Science in November 1991. Subsurface archaeological testing was conducted both in the yard area to the west and south of the historic church and in the church interior. The study area for the identification survey consisted of the original church lot, which first had been rented by the Colored Baptist Society in 1818, and the adjacent lot to the south which was acquired by the church in 1919 (Alexandria Deed Book 69:111).

The archaeological investigation around the exterior church foundation identified builder's trenches associated with the construction of the church and with subsequent alterations. Testing in the yard area identified a buried cultural deposit datable to the early to mid-19th-century. The deposit covered a builder's trench along the west wall of the old church. This fact and artifacts recovered from the trench, allow us to tentatively date the construction of the main block of the church to around the second quarter of the 19th-century. The front 10-foot section of the church and the rear addition were added at a later date, probably in the last decades of the 19th-century.

Archaeological remains present in the basement were limited to the foundation walls. The current basement was excavated beneath the standing structure lowering the basement level by about 3 feet. This occurred around the turn of the century and, at that time, a concrete floor was poured. Inspection of the building by an architectural historian identified changes in the height of the floor above the basement after the front 10-foot section had been added.

The archaeological investigations also revealed differences in the construction of the church foundation from wall to wall. The foundation walls varied in depth, thickness, and style of brickwork. These variations may represent economic measures as well as the work of different bricklayers.

Both the church and the subsurface deposits were considered to be potentially significant for their information potential. In addition, the church property is significant architecturally and for its association with one of the earliest African-American neighborhoods in Alexandria, known as the "The Bottoms" (Cressey 1985). The church would have been a focal point for this community and an important representation of the community to the wider society. The archaeology revealed unusual architectural features that may shed light on the building techniques used in the construction of the church. This work could be incorporated with wider architectural and historical research into how the construction of the church was funded, who built it (e.g. building societies), as well as the specific building techniques used.

The 19th-century deposit in the yard is significant for the information it may be able to provide on life in "The Bottoms" during the 19th-century. This deposit is probably associated with a family of free African-American tenants, the Beckleys, who occupied the lot next to the church throughout the 19th-century. The Beckley family occupied an economic position near the lowest rank of Alexandria society. There is little historical documentation available on this segment of

society. Archaeological investigation has the potential to provide information on aspects such as diet, consumer behavior, and the economic and social strategies pursued by the Beckleys.

Based upon the recommendations of the identification phase of study and the review comments from Alexandria Archaeology, further archaeological work should be conducted. The areas designated for further study were: (1) the yard area to the south and west of the historic church; (2) the area immediately adjacent to the church foundation where foundation stabilization was scheduled to occur; and (3) the area to the north of the historic church and to the east of the modern church (Figure 2).

The yard area to the south and west of the historic church contained the deposit related to early free black occupation of the block. The purpose of excavation in this area was to further sample this stratum and to look for remains of structures and other features associated with this period of occupation. This was proposed to be accomplished by the excavation of a series of units; the number of units and their locations to be negotiated with Alexandria Archaeology.

The area adjacent to the foundations of the historic church should be subject to archaeological construction monitoring. An archaeologist should be present at all times to monitor the backhoe which will excavate trenches necessary for the stabilization of the foundation. The archaeologist would record and excavate any features, such as builder's trenches, which might be present. When the foundation was uncovered, the archaeologist would clean and record the foundation, assuring that it be drawn to scale and photographed prior to stabilization.

The area to the north of the historic church and to the east of the modern church would have been subject to some construction related disturbance when the modern church was built. It should be noted, however, that the subsurface remains of deep features, such as wells, cisterns, privies and trash pits would be anticipated to be present in this area. Monitoring will occur to determine the presence or absence of such archaeological features. If any such features are discovered, they will be recorded and excavated to the extent of construction impact.